

SERMON-BASED STUDY: PILATE AND BARABBAS

Notes:

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QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

ENGAGE WITH THE MESSAGE

Mark 15:1-15, ESV – ¹ And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ And they cried out again, "Crucify him." ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

- 1 Why do you think Pilate went to the crowd instead of asking the Jewish leaders who they wanted him to release?

2 Like Pilate, we are often tempted to prioritize public opinion or comfort over doing the right thing. Share a time when you were faced with this kind of decision. How did you respond?

3 In what ways do you see yourself as Barabbas, a guilty sinner, and how does Jesus taking your place affect you?

Matthew 27:24-26, ESV – ²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” ²⁵ And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” ²⁶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

4 How does Pilate’s action of washing his hands reflect common human tendencies to avoid responsibility?

5 What is the significance of the crowd saying, *His blood be on us and on our children*?

6 Pilate calls Jesus a “just person” while sentencing him to death. What does this tell us about his character? What does this tell us about compromise?

Luke 23:18-25, ESV – ¹⁸ But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”— ¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹ but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” ²² A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.” ²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

7 Why did the crowd choose to release a known insurrectionist rather than Jesus? What does this reveal about societal pressures?

How does the release of Barabbas, who deserved death, in place of Jesus, who was innocent, serve as a vivid illustration of the gospel message?

TAKING IT HOME

When you read this story, in what ways do you see yourself in the crowd, as Pilate, as Barrabas or as one of the religious leaders? What are some practical ways you can turn from these things and follow Jesus more faithfully. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to show you what next steps you need to take in your faith journey.

PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUEST

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FOR FURTHER STUDY

John 18:28-19:16